TTCI management filed a petition in Calcutta High Court for liquidation of the Company. The case is pending in the Court. TTCI is unable to generate funds for the revival of its gardens.

**Shifting of Office of Salt Commissioner from Jaipur to Ahmedabad**

1870. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVASHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Kutch Saurashtra Region produces nearly 65 per cent Salt of total Salt production in the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that large number of representations have been received by Government over the years to shift the office of Salt Commissioner from Jaipur to Ahmedabad;

(c) if so, whether the proposals to shift the office is under consideration of Government; and

(d) if not, how would Government ensure easy access of the salt producers to the Salt Commissioner's office to resolve their problems quickly?

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) There had been a persistent demand from the Salt Manufacturers' Associations of Gujarat as well as the State Government of Gujarat for shifting the Salt Commissioner's Office from Jaipur to a suitable location in Gujarat on the ground that Gujarat contributes about 70% of the total salt production in the country. After careful consideration of the matter, orders were issued by the Government in 1994 to shift the Salt Cmmissioner's Office from Jaipur to Gandhi Nagar (Gujarat). However, the all India Salt Department Employees' Union filed a writ petition in the Rajasthan High Court at Jaipur against the orders of the Government. While admitting the writ petition, High Court stayed the operation of Government's orders. The matter is still pending before the High Court and is, therefore, sub-judice.

**Measures for fungus and Bacteria free agricultural products**

1871. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether farm exports have shrunk during the last two financial years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measures taken for quality upgradation to ensure fungus and bacteria free agricultural products to avoid rejction abroad?

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) International trade in farm products is dependent on prevailing international demand coinciding with domestic ability to supply, prevailing world prices of commodities, the varieties being traded and consumer preferences. The value of agro items exported, excluding marine products, tea, coffee, rubber, castor oil and cotton during the last two years is as below:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1997-98 | Rs. 15169 crores | April—Oct. 1997-98 | Rs. 7457.58 crores |
| 1998-99 | Rs. 15960 crores | April—Oct. 1998-99 | Rs. 8712.62 crores |
| | | April—Oct. 1999-2000 | Rs. 7702.78 crores |

(Source: DGCI & S, Calcutta)

(c) As a measure to ensure fungus & bacterial free agricultural products to prevent rejection abroad, schemes have been developed for compulsory inspection and testing groundnuts for aflatoxin. The sampling & testing methodologies and the nomination of laboratories found capable to carry out checks and certify with reliability have been completed. Assistance is being extended to improve drying of agricultural products so as to ensure an environment that discourages development of fungus and bacteria in the product.

**Agreement with US Trade Representative on import restrictions**

1872. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the recent visit of the United States Trade Representative, Charlene Barshefsky to New Delhi, an agreement was reached to lift import restrictions and import licensing requirements on a large number of agricultural, textile and consumer products;

(b) if so, the precise terms of the agreement and item-wise restrictions removed thereby; and

(c) the likely impact thereof on exports to and import from the US during the ensuing year, category-wise?

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, consequent to the rulings and